

# BE READY FOR AN EARTHQUAKE

**DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT  
IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS**



[www.capetown.gov.za/disaster](http://www.capetown.gov.za/disaster)



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Making progress possible. Together.

Earthquakes cause mild to violent shaking and may occur anytime, anywhere. This guide can help you protect yourself, your family and your property before, during and after an earthquake.

# KNOW YOUR RISK



## 1. What:

An earthquake is the sudden, rapid shaking of the earth, caused by the breaking and shifting of subterranean rock as it releases strain that has accumulated over a long time. Initial mild shaking may worsen and become extremely violent within seconds. Additional earthquakes, called aftershocks, may occur for hours, days or even months. Most are smaller than the initial earthquake but larger magnitude aftershocks also occur.



## 2. When:

Earthquakes can happen at any time of the year and occur without warning.



## 3. Where:

Cape Town is at risk for earthquakes.



## 4. Impact:

Larger earthquakes may cause deaths, injuries and extensive property damage. Most casualties and injuries during an earthquake occur:

- when people fall while trying to walk or run during the shaking;
- when they are hit by falling, flying or sliding household items or non-structural debris; and/or
- when they are struck or trapped by collapsing walls or other parts of the building.

Transportation, electricity, water and other services may be disrupted.



In some areas, shaking can cause liquefaction - when the ground acts more like a liquid. When this happens, the ground can no longer support the weight of a building.

# BEFORE AN EARTHQUAKE

## DO A HAZARD HUNT FOR POTENTIAL HAZARDS AND THINGS THAT MIGHT FALL.



Cabinet doors can fly open, allowing contents to crash to the floor. Secure them with latches.



Objects such as framed photos, books, lamps and other items that you keep on shelves and tables can become flying hazards. Secure them with hooks and adhesives to keep them in place. Move heavy or breakable items to lower shelves.



Use closed hooks to secure mirrors, pictures frames and other hanging items to the wall. Do not hang heavy objects over beds, sofas or any place you may be seated.



Electronics such as computers, television sets and microwave ovens are heavy and expensive to replace. Secure them with flexible nylon straps.



Bookcases, filing cabinets, china cabinets and other tall furniture should be anchored to the wall. Use flexible straps that allow them to sway without falling to the floor.



Secure your water heater, refrigerator and other major appliances with the appropriate straps screwed into the wall to help keep them from falling over and rupturing gas or electric connections. Gas appliances should have flexible connectors to absorb the shaking while reducing the risk of fire.

**NOTE:** These adhesives, straps, hooks, latches and other safety devices are available at most hardware and home improvement stores as well as online retailers.



**PRACTISE:** Everyone should know what to do during an earthquake and should practise how to **drop, cover and hold on**. Learn and practise first-aid skills.

**GATHER CRITICAL DOCUMENTS:** Once the immediate danger passes, it will be helpful to have your legal, financial and medical documents at hand in order to receive assistance and work with your insurance company. Take time now to safeguard critical documents and take pictures or videos of your belongings.



**DISCUSS:** Talking about disasters and helping others prepare make everyone safer. Discuss what you have done to prepare with your family, friends, neighbours and colleagues.

**STORE:** Gather and store the basic supplies your family would need for at least three days should grocery stores and other services be unavailable, if the power is out or if you are unable to stay in your home. A sustained power outage can have a significant impact on people who require electricity to power medical equipment, so make sure that you have a plan to take care of yourself and your family during an outage. See the Family Disaster Preparedness Guidelines on how to prepare.



# DURING AN EARTHQUAKE



## IF YOU ARE INDOORS:

**Drop** to your hands and knees.

**Cover** your head and neck with your arms. This position protects you from falling and provides some protection for vital organs. Since moving can put you in danger from the debris in your path, only move if you need to get away from the danger of falling objects. If you can move safely, crawl for additional cover under a sturdy desk or table. If there is low furniture or an interior wall or corner nearby and the path is clear, these may also provide some additional cover. Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall, such as lighting fixtures or furniture. **Hold on** to any sturdy shelter until the shaking stops. **Do not** run outside! Stay where you are until the shaking stops. **Do not** stand in a doorway as this does not provide protection from falling or flying objects and you might not be able to remain standing.



## IF YOU ARE OUTDOORS:

If you can, move away from buildings, streetlights and utility wires. Once in the **open, drop, cover and hold on. Stay there** until the shaking stops. This might not be possible in a city, so you may need to duck inside a building to avoid falling debris.



## IF YOU ARE IN BED:

**Stay** there and **cover** your head and neck with a pillow. At night, hazards and debris are difficult to see and avoid; attempts to move in the dark result in more injuries than remaining in bed.



## IF YOU ARE IN A MOVING VEHICLE:

It is difficult to control a vehicle during the shaking, so stop as quickly and safely as possible, and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses and utility wires. Proceed cautiously once the earthquake has stopped. Avoid roads, bridges or ramps that may have been damaged in the earthquake.

# AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE

Once the shaking has stopped, wait a minute before getting up and then look around for debris or other dangers. If you are able to safely move to exit the building and there is an open space to go to, exit the building and avoid damaged areas and downed electricity lines. For buildings in metropolitan areas without any open space nearby, it may be safer to remain in the building until you are certain you will avoid additional glass and debris that may fall from nearby buildings. Remember aftershocks may cause further damage to weakened structures and present hazards to those exiting buildings.

Drop, cover and hold on whenever you feel any shaking.



**Drop!**



**Cover!**



**Hold on!**



**Lock!**



**Cover!**



**Hold on!**

- Monitor local news reports (battery-operated radio, TV and social media alerts) for emergency information and instructions.
- If you are trapped, do not move about or kick up dust. Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or clothing. Shout only as a last resort. By shouting you may inhale dangerous amounts of dust. Use your cellphone to call or text for help. Tap on a pipe or wall, or use a whistle, if available, so rescuers can locate you.



- If you are in a damaged building and there is a safe way out through the debris, leave and go to an open space outside. If you can do so safely, take a moment to take what you might need immediately and can carry easily, such as a purse or go bag (a bag packed with essential items, kept ready for use in the event of an emergency evacuation of one's home - like a family disaster supply kit). Once outside, do not re-enter until the building is certified as safe.
- Check for injuries and provide assistance if you have training. Assist with rescues if you can do this safely.
- Stay away from damaged areas. Never use a lighter or matches near damaged areas. Check for and extinguish small fires.
- Have your utilities inspected by qualified professionals for damage to the electrical system, sewage and water lines.
- If your home has been damaged and is no longer safe, and you need a place to stay, follow local media for information on shelters.



### **Earthquakes can destroy or make buildings and roads unsafe.**

- Use extreme caution around debris. Do not attempt to remove heavy debris by yourself and assist with rescues only if you can do so safely.
- Wear protective clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, work gloves, and sturdy, thick-soled shoes during clean-up. These will protect you from further injury from broken glass, exposed nails or other objects.
- Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or you are standing in water.
- If you smell gas, call the City's emergency number on 021 480 7700.
- Photograph or take a video of damage to your property to assist with filing an insurance claim.
- Know that this will be an emotional time and it is normal to feel a little blue. Seek help for yourself or others if depression or anxiety persists or seems out of proportion for the circumstances.
- Expect aftershocks. These additional earthquakes are usually less violent than the main quake but can be strong enough to further damage weakened structures. They can occur in the first hours, days, weeks or even months after the quake. Be ready to protect yourself.





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**HELP!**

FOR EMERGENCIES CALL

**021 480 7700**

FROM ANY PHONE OR

**107 FROM A LANDLINE**